

**COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO  
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND BUILDING  
STAFF REPORT**

**PLANNING COMMISSION**

3-1

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| MEETING DATE<br>January 27, 2005   | CONTACT/PHONE<br>Chuck Stevenson, AICP<br>805-781-5197 | APPLICANT<br>San Luis Obispo Council<br>of Governments<br>(SLOCOG) | FILE NO.<br>N/A                                      |
| SUBJECT<br>Study session by the SLOCOG staff for the draft 2004 Regional Transportation Plan   |  |  |  |
| RECOMMENDED ACTION<br>Hear the presentation by SLOCOG staff and provide comments and recommendations.  |  |  |  |
| ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION<br>Not required  |  |  |  |
| LAND USE CATEGORY<br>NA  | COMBINING DESIGNATION<br>NA                            | ASSESSOR PARCEL NUMBER<br>NA                                       | SUPERVISOR<br>DISTRICT(S)<br>① ② ③ ④ ⑤<br><b>All</b> |
| PLANNING AREA STANDARDS:<br>NA   |  |  |  |
| EXISTING USES:<br>NA   |  |  |  |
| SURROUNDING LAND USE CATEGORIES AND USES:<br>NA  |  |  |  |
| OTHER AGENCY / ADVISORY GROUP INVOLVEMENT:<br>SLOCOG   |  |  |  |
| TOPOGRAPHY:<br>NA  |  | VEGETATION:<br>NA  |  |
| PROPOSED SERVICES:<br>Water supply: N/A<br>Sewage Disposal: N/A<br>Fire Protection: NA   |  | ACCEPTANCE DATE:<br>NA   |  |
| ADDITIONAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED BY CONTACTING THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & BUILDING AT:<br>COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER ♦ SAN LUIS OBISPO ♦ CALIFORNIA 93408 ♦ (805) 781-5600 ♦ FAX: (805) 781-1242 |  |  |  |

**Discussion**

This item is a study session concerning a portion (Chapter 3- Land Use) of the draft 2004 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) staff is in the process of preparing the RTP and would like to acquaint you with the plan, the upcoming public review period, the schedule for its review and approval by the SLOCOG, and then discuss with your Commission how you can assist in forwarding some of the goals in the plan. SLOCOG staff is also interested in hearing any comments or suggestions you may have concerning the Land Use Chapter.

3.2

Your Commission can play an important role in facilitating the development of communities in ways that encourage alternative transportation choices, reduce trips, and provide more efficient travel patterns through your review of land development projects and community plans brought before you for consideration. The performance of the local and regional transportation system is dependant upon the relationship between land use and transportation and how land uses serve to connect commercial, employment, and recreational centers. It is a primary goal of the policies in the RTP to facilitate the opportunities and incentives to create a balanced transportation system that gives equal consideration to public transit, paratransit, bicycles, pedestrians, and the automobile. For these reasons, Planning staff has scheduled this matter before you today.

Staff report prepared by Chuck Stevenson, AICP, Supervising Planner and reviewed by Warren Hoag, AICP, Division Manager

# Chapter 3

## Land Use & Transportation: Better Connections

3-3

SLOCOG's efforts to foster sound land use practices focus on facilitating the development of communities in ways that reduce trips and travel distances. These issues are the key to providing the framework for efficient transportation networks. Vision 2025 promotes the enhancement of regional and community livability by enhancing economic vitality, environmental sustainability, one's sense of community, and accessibility to basic services.

The performance of the local and regional transportation system is dependent upon adjacent and surrounding land uses. Chapter 3 emphasizes the relationship between land use and transportation and focuses on the intermodal connections between residential areas and commercial, employment, and recreational centers.

### Chapter contents

**Key Principles**

**Relationship to Other Plans**

**Action Policies**

*The following points are the focus of land use in Vision 2025:*

- *Designing communities, or when practical, retrofitting existing communities to be more multi-modal and less auto dependent;*
- *Promoting the use of integrated modes of travel that provide seamless transportation options and reduces environmental impacts;*
- *Encouraging the use of bikes and transit, and walking.*
- *Enhancing intermodal and multimodal connectivity.*

*Improved modal access through better design and land use decision-making maximizes transportation choices and air quality. The use of more sensitive and human scaled design elements in both public works projects and private development will allow for and support alternative forms of transportation.*

A primary goal of SLOCOG, through the action policies defined at the end of this chapter, is to facilitate the ways in which communities are spatially organized by providing opportunities and incentives to create a balanced transportation system that gives equal consideration to public transit, paratransit, bicycles, pedestrians, and the automobile. This type of approach is expressed in many ways but is commonly referred to as "Smart Growth."

## Key Principles of SLOCOG's Land Use Programs

### 1. Foster Distinctive, Attractive Communities with a Strong Sense of Place

Employ context sensitive design techniques and encourage communities to incorporate smart growth design code options as an alternative to conventional standards. Craft a vision for development and construction, which responds to community values of architectural beauty and distinctiveness, as well as expanded choices in housing and transportation.

2. Create a Range of Housing Opportunities and Choices

Support opportunities for quality housing to become available for people of all income levels. Maximize “choices” in location, size, design, diversity, cost and type of housing throughout the region. The central goal of any smart growth plan is the quality of the neighborhoods where we live. They should be safe, convenient, attractive, and affordable. Low-density development too often forces trade-offs between these goals. Some neighborhoods are safe but not convenient. Others are convenient but not affordable. Careful planning can help bring all these elements together.

3. Provide a Variety of Transportation and Land Use Choices

Provide people with viable distinct choices in housing, shopping, employment, communities, and transportation routes and modes of transportation – biking, public transit, walking, and driving. Those who want/need to drive can, but people who would rather not drive everywhere or don't own a car have other choices.

4. Create Walkable Neighborhoods and Cities

Support the development of friendly, cohesive and integrated pedestrian facilities. - Walkable communities are desirable places. Air quality and health benefits have been shown where walkable communities exist as well as reduced transportation infrastructure impacts and costs.

5. Mix Land Uses

Promote integrating mixed land uses into communities as a key strategy for achieving compactness in urban development, reducing dependence upon the automobile, improving the jobs/housing balance and providing for more affordable housing. Encourage local jurisdictions to evaluate their land use elements and zoning regulations to allow mixed uses and determine appropriate areas where mixed uses can be encouraged.

6. Strengthen and Direct Development Towards Existing Communities

Direct development towards existing communities already served by infrastructure; utilize the resources that existing neighborhoods offer; and conserve open space and natural resources. Fund improvements in transportation in the communities where people live today. Opening up green space to new development means the cost of new schools, roads, sewer lines, and water supplies will be borne by residents throughout the area. Taking advantage of existing infrastructure keeps taxes down. Smart growth helps on both fronts, saving money and protecting the environment. Put the needs of existing communities first.

7. Take Advantage of Compact Building Design

Encourage communities to incorporate more compact building design as an alternative to conventional, land consumptive development. - One of the major downfalls of sprawl is traffic. Smart growth's emphasis on mixing land uses, clustering development, and providing multiple transportation choices helps manage congestion, pollute less, and save energy.

8. Preserve Open Space, Farmland, Natural Beauty and Critical Environmental Areas

Support smart growth goals by bolstering local economies, preserving critical environmental areas, improving a community's quality of life, and guiding new growth into existing communities. By focusing development in already built-up areas, smart growth preserves rapidly vanishing natural treasures. From forests and farms to wetlands and wildlife, smart growth allows us the opportunity to pass on to our children the landscapes we love.

9. Make Development Decisions Predictable Fair and Cost Effective

Support the development of clear standards and guidelines to guide the review and approval process. For a community to be successful in implementing smart growth, both the private and public sector must embrace it. In many instances the development review process has become far too complex, time consuming, and unpredictable.

10. Encourage Community and Stakeholder Collaboration

Support community and stakeholder collaboration. - Growth can create great places to live, work and play -- if it responds to a community's own sense of how and where it wants to grow. Community engagement creates and maintains ownership in the process and the product.

11. Promote Regional Equity – Shared Benefits

Seek to provide and share resources and services among member agencies. - SLOCOG maintains countywide and interregional facility priorities and endeavors to program funding equitably among member jurisdictions. Smart growth seeks to enable all residents to be beneficiaries of prosperity by making connectivity a priority and a reality. Having transportation options is needed for a healthy regional economy.

12. Strengthen Regional Cooperation

Promote the coordination and cooperation of all partners within the region and between this region and other areas of the state. - Our local transportation networks, economy, housing market, watersheds, and numerous other systems, function at the regional level. Strictly local resources are inadequate and do not reach far enough to incorporate all stakeholder parties. Local, regional, state and federal agencies need to work together to effectively and economically accomplish these tasks.

\*list of principles derived from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's *Smart Growth Network* and *Smart Growth America*

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3-6

## Action Policies

|       | <i>Land Use and Transportation: Better Connections</i>   |
|-------|--|
| LU-1  | Reduce travel times and trips by encouraging local jurisdictions to provide a wide range of housing types and sizes while providing employment opportunities within each planning subregion.                             |
| LU-2  | Seek change in the fiscal relationships and tax distribution mechanisms between the State and local agencies to provide adequate funding that will support good land use and development practices.                      |
| LU-3  | Identify planning and design standards that locals can implement to offer flexible travel alternatives within and between the communities in the region.   |
| LU-4  | Support the implementation of land use strategies that enhance multimodal transportation choices, limit automobile oriented development and promote pedestrian scale communities.  |
| LU-5  | Encourage local jurisdictions to establish and maintain a mix of transit, bicycle, and pedestrian access choices.  |
| LU-6  | Continue funding project scoping studies and projects that benefit the transportation system; maintain a sense of community, and enhance the streetscape.  |
| LU-7  | Review and comment on major plans and local land development proposals, encouraging livable community design concepts, and enhanced multi- and intermodal components, including pedestrian, bicycle, and public transit. |
| LU-8  | Develop a library of livability concepts, plans, standards, and successful project examples to be used as a resource by member jurisdictions and local developers.   |
| LU-9  | Advocate "context sensitive solutions" in all aspects of project development to ensure community concerns are integrated in project design and construction.   |
| LU-10 | Give a high priority to funding improvements addressing existing deficiencies to the roadway system in or near Central Business Districts.   |

## Relationship to Other Plans

**General Plans (Land Use and Circulation Elements)** – *Vision 2025 is updated every three years to reflect updates in the local plans of SLOCOG's member agencies and to support the ultimate goal of providing an integrated multimodal transportation system. It is also important for the Land Use and Circulation Elements to accommodate and encourage the development of community form and style of member agencies, conducive to allowing convenient and efficient transportation connections and choices. These General Plan Elements are the essential building blocks that the transportation system relies upon to allow for the development of efficient systems - whether they are for the automobile, transit, bicycles or pedestrians.*

*As noted in the discussion regarding "Smart Growth," the key to the success of both is a strong relationship between the two. The following Action Policies reflect this relationship:*

**San Luis Obispo County Clean Air Plan (CAP)**- The Clean Air Plan for San Luis Obispo County was adopted in 2001 by the San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District (APCD). The CAP discusses specific land use and circulation management programs as well as Transportation Control Measures (discussed below). It contains five recommended Land-Use related program groupings:

- Planning Compact Communities
- Providing for Mixed Land Use
- Balancing Jobs and Housing

- Circulation Management Policies and Programs
- Communication, Coordination and Monitoring

3-7

The circulation management policies suggest:

- Increased transit use.
- Bicycling & walking.
- Managing traffic flow.
- Improving communication.

These programs are consistent with the **Vision 2025** Land Use and Circulation strategies. They recognize that the real solutions lie in changes to the “way we do business” and this requires a paradigm shift toward more compact communities that are designed with higher densities. Managing congestion, polluting less and saving energy are all central in Smart Growth’s emphasis on mixing land uses, clustering development, and providing multiple transportation choices. SLOCOG supports the Land Use strategies identified above and shares the goals that these programs seek to accomplish. The CAP, while closely linking to land-use planning tools, also relates to the transportation planning principles outlined in the following chapter.

***CAP and Transportation Demand/System Management.***

Chapter 4 – Maximizing System Efficiency - contains the discussion and action policy approaches for the TSM and TDM strategies of **Vision 2025**. These planning strategies, like Land Use/Transportation connections, are connected to the CAP in that by implementing each, benefits can be realized both in less air pollution and less congestion on our roadways. The brief discussion below highlights how **Vision 2025**, in the following chapter, works in tandem with the CAP.

The CAP contains Transportation Control Measures (TCM). TCM’s are programs to achieve improved air quality by reducing use of motor vehicles and increasing use of alternative transportation. The TSM/TDM policies, which are outlined in Chapter 4, are intended to be consistent with the TCMs found in the CAP. Ideally, the selected programs to modify the existing transportation system will include both mobility and air quality benefits. Equally, the best air quality improvement programs related to motor vehicle use will benefit mobility and access.

The CAP uses 3 categories for TCM’s: Demand Management, System Management, and Land Use Planning. The following nine (9) TCMs are designed to reduce automobile emissions:

|  | <b>SLOCOG Action/Position</b>                  |
|--|--|
| 1. Employer Based Trip Reduction .....                 | Support  |
| 2. School Based Trip Reduction.....                    | Support  |
| 3. Local Transit Improvements.....                     | Largely Implemented, Enhancements Ongoing      |
| 4. Regional Transit Improvements .....                 | Largely Implemented, Enhancements Ongoing      |
| 5. Bicycling and Bikeway Enhancements .....            | Programmed and/or Ongoing Implementation       |
| 6. Park and Ride Lots .....                            | Support - Ongoing Implementation and Expansion |
| 7. Motor Vehicle Inspection and Control Program .....  | Support  |
| 8. Traffic Flow Improvements.....                      | Support, Ongoing Implementation                |
| 9. Telecommuting, Teleconferencing, Telelearning ..... | Support  |

With exception of the employer-based trip reduction program, all of the above programs are to be implemented through regional funding priorities, informal intergovernmental cooperation and more formalized cooperative agreements between the APCD and affected agencies. Many of these measures have since been adopted into member agency General Plans and Circulation Elements. The Land Use Strategies component of the RTP includes many of the Circulation and Land Use Management Strategies of the Clean Air Plan.

For areas in non-attainment of Federal air quality standards, the Federal Clean Air Act requires that projects and programs in the RTP provide for expeditious implementation of TCMs in the State Implementation Plan (SIP) to meet emission reduction targets. Since San Luis Obispo County is in attainment of all Federal ambient air quality standards, TCMs are not required for inclusion in the SIP. SLOCOG, however, has by policy placed a heavy preference for TCM project implementation. A TCM progress report was included in the region's Federal Transportation Improvement Program demonstrating expeditious implementation.

In addition to mobility benefits, TSM/TDM strategies are closely related to efforts to improve air quality through focus on the use of the transportation system. In 1989, San Luis Obispo County was designated as nonattainment with the state health based standard for ozone. Ozone forming pollutants throughout San Luis Obispo County have been significantly reduced since that time. For the years 2000 through 2002, no violations of the State hourly ozone standard (0.09 ppm) were measured at any of the six community-based monitoring stations in SLO County. Based upon that record, the State Air Resources Board re-designated San Luis Obispo County as attainment with the state health based ozone standard in January 2004 (San Luis Obispo APCD). This is a major achievement, but this does not mean clean air efforts are complete. Residents must continue to minimize air pollution to keep our air clean and healthy for our communities. San Luis Obispo County is still designated a nonattainment area for particulate matter under California air quality standards.